

CONDOLENCE MOTION

Moved by: Councillor Adam Vaughan

Seconded by: Councillor Mary Fragedakis

The Mayor and Members of Toronto City Council are deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Lilein (Elisabeth) Schaeffer on December 12, 2010.

Lilein Schaeffer was NOW's vice-president and founding mentor.

She was born completely ahead of her time into the wild and perilous art-crazed Berlin of the 20s. Growing up in the heartland of harsh parenting was just the first set of challenges to fire her revolutionary spirit. She learned pretty quickly how it felt to be a little Catholic schoolgirl stranded in a hostile Protestant schoolyard. And as a young kid, she traversed the seismic epoch shift that brought Hitler on just taking her daily downtown walks from her house to the zoo. She had to fight the power from a young age, and never stopped.

She was brilliant and fun and positive beyond reason. And with all the deep hardships she faced head-on in her iconoclastic life, she was deeply unorthodox and wise. Her way was never the easy one. It was fierce. That was Lilein's style.

By 1939, Lilien and her family moved to Mexico City. After marrying, she moved with her husband and first child to Levittown, New York.

By the mid-60s, Lilien had become a newly widowed single mother of three upon the death of her second husband. Ever resilient, she took herself back to school and earned a masters degree in psychology from York University

With degrees happily in hand, she found her way to a passionately engaged if sometimes frustrating career as a school psychologist at the Toronto Board of Education that extended over 17 years. Bold, determined and ever creative, she used her same secret weapons to get the kids at her schools the help they needed. You've probably already guessed that she never met a bureaucratic rule she wouldn't try to tear down or pull apart to help her kids.

She was the very first person to hear the bold NOW idea from her daughter Alice Klein and Michael Hollett. In a heartbeat, she was in, body and soul, and she never looked back or wavered.

Even though her NOW phase started only as she entered the last third of her life, she was always there with full energy to cover off whatever was needed most. The span was enormous – investor, babysitter, circulation director, education writer, corporate vice-president, truck driver.

But most of all, her beautiful, ever-subversive can-do energy is integral to the stridently determined independent voice NOW has become and sustained for close to 30 years.

Founding NOW wasn't all that Lileen was up to during her retirement years. In 1997, when the Harris government waged its war on education spending by cutting trustee salaries to a tiny stipend, the lion in Lileen was roused to action. She decided to run for the school board and brought the same age-busting vitality she gave to NOW to her new political career.

At 76, Lileen was elected along with Jack on the Layton/Tabuns councillor/trustee ticket.

No one could help but notice, Lileen was fascinating and a passionate warrior in life and in dying.

The City Clerk is requested to convey, on behalf of the Members of Toronto City Council, our sincere sympathy to Lileen Schaeffer's family.

December 16, 2010